

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

For the convenience of the Examiner, all claims have been presented whether or not an amendment has been made. The claims have been amended as follows:

1. **(Currently Amended)** A method of using a public communications network to manage the return of an item purchased by a consumer from a remote direct merchandiser, comprising the steps of:

receiving a first communication at a returns manager system, the first communication comprising return request data from a local returns site;

providing a second communication from the returns manager system to the local returns site, the second communication comprising return validation data having at least a return validation code;

validating the return by matching the return validation code with a pre-authorization code provided by the consumer to the local returns site, the pre-authorization code obtained by the consumer and indicating prior approval of the return by a remote direct merchandiser from whom the item was purchased; and

crediting an account of the consumer for a return value of the returned item after validating the return;

wherein the first and second communications are communicated using a public communications network.

2. **(Original)** The method of Claim 1, wherein the public communications network is the Internet.

3. **(Original)** The method of Claim 1, wherein the public communications network is the public telephone network.

4. **(Original)** The method of Claim 1, wherein the public communications network is a combination of Internet access and public telephone access.

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